

CAPITOL OFFICE
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900
TEL (916) 651-4010
FAX (916) 327-2433

DISTRICT OFFICES
1057 MacArthur Blvd., Suite 206
San Leandro, CA 94577
TEL (510) 577-2310
FAX (510) 577-2308

39155 Liberty St., Suite F-610
Fremont, CA 94538
TEL (510) 794-3900
FAX (510) 794-3940

California State Senate

SENATOR ELLEN M. CORBETT

MAJORITY LEADER

REPRESENTING ALAMEDA AND SANTA CLARA COUNTIES



STANDING COMMITTEES

Business, Professions &
Economic Development
Energy, Utilities &
Communications
Environmental Quality
Insurance
Judiciary

SELECT COMMITTEES

Emerging Technology:
Biotechnology and
Green Energy Jobs, Chair
California's Wine Industry
Mental Health

JOINT COMMITTEE

Rules

August 30, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
United States House of Representatives
241 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Lee
United States House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eric Swalwell
United States House of Representatives
501 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Honda
United States House of Representatives
1713 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
United States House of Representatives
1401 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

A recent report by the independent Little Hoover Commission highlights the need to reduce backlogs and increase efficiencies in processing claims. It recommends federal and state collaboration to obtain the most accurate information on California veterans so that the state may increase outreach efforts between counties, veterans organizations and non-profit groups.

As elected officials that represent many of the same constituents in our shared districts in the greater East Bay, I know you are aware and concerned about the issues raised by the report. I welcome working collaboratively with you and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to reduce the veterans claims backlog. I also ask that you encourage federal agencies to provide the State of California with updated information about veterans so that we may reach out and provide critically needed services.

As you know, the 2013-14 California State Budget allocated an additional \$6 million dollars to assist California veterans. The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) will receive \$3 million to form Strike Teams in each of the USDVA Regional Offices to help reduce the backlog of pending claims. This backlog represents hundreds of millions of dollars in benefits

U.S. Senators Boxer and Feinstein
U.S. Representatives Eshoo, Honda, Lee, Lofgren, and Swalwell
August 30, 2013
Page Two

that California veterans could be receiving. Another \$3 million was allocated in the budget for County Veterans Service Officers to better provide veterans with free USDVA claims assistance and referral to local, state and federal programs. I was proud to advocate for the inclusion of these millions of dollars by the state this year to assist with the federal government's to process these long overdue compensation and benefit claims for veterans. These California budget appropriations were borne out of a strong sense of frustration in addressing the backlog and a deep sense of respect for our veterans whom we all serve as our shared constituents.

As you know, veterans receive services from a variety of organizations and agencies. As part of their effort to connect veterans with needed services, these organizations and agencies must be able to locate veterans to determine individual needs and inform them of available benefits. Despite their advantages, general outreach events are not enough. As leaders, we must promote ways of increasing opportunities to work with California veterans who need services. The federal government must also be proactive in obtaining the most up-to-date veteran information and providing it to the state in electronic format.

I am encouraged to see that CalVet will be able to file claims electronically as part of the new Digital to Digital program and appreciate that they now have access to the Defense Personnel Records Information System, but these efforts alone are not enough. I would like to work with you to ensure that this claims backlog is addressed promptly. Time is of the essence as many veterans have already waited months or years, some even dying before they get the benefits that they rightfully deserve.

It is crucial that state and federal officials come together to fix the injustice that many of our nearly two million veterans face. I look forward to partnering with you on these important issues. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions. Both my office and I stand ready and available to help in any way to get the job done.

Sincerely,



ELLEN M. CORBETT
Senate Majority Leader

EMC:jvl